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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

223rd Meeting
Monday, 20 April 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Martynov . . . . . (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Programme of work

The Chairman: Representatives have before them informal paper No. 3, revision 2, containing the timetable for the last stage of this year's substantive session. As can be seen from the timetable, the Bureau — bearing in mind that Working Group II, dealing with the issue of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), is in its third and final year of deliberations — has decided to allocate a little more time to that Group.

I would also like to draw representatives' attention to the fact that the reports of the Working Groups are to be approved on Friday, 24 April. I am sure that the Chairmen of the Working Groups will do their best to comply with this schedule.

Reports by Chairmen of Working Groups

The Chairman: I call first on the Chairman of Working Group I.

Mr. Aguirre de Cárcer (Spain), Chairman of Working Group I (*interpretation from Spanish*): Last week, and in the meeting that we held the previous Thursday, Working Group I, on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, held a wide-ranging discussion on this issue. The discussion was based primarily on the many statements made by delegations on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. These statements enriched the documentation and the presentations of last year's session.

Some delegations also submitted working papers, which were distributed in all the official languages. At the same time, in parallel with delegations' general statements on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, delegations also participated actively, contributing comments on the working paper prepared by the Chairman and distributed at the outset of our meetings.

The Working Group has thus received from delegations a very broad range of comments and proposals intended to enrich this working paper.

Lastly, the Working Group, starting with its meeting this afternoon, will begin consideration of additional issues that require more thorough discussion. Some of these issues were already identified in the report of the Working Group at last year's session. Other questions that come under this same heading were identified in statements made by delegations in the general debate at this session and in general statements made by delegations in the framework of Working Group I.

My own assessment thus far is that the Working Group is making good progress, and we are therefore confident that it will be possible at the end of this week to submit a report to the Commission reflecting that progress.

The Chairman: I now call on the Chairman of Working Group II.

Mr. Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia), Chairman of Working Group II: Working Group II held several

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meetings last week, focusing its discussion on questions of how to formulate a possible common agreement on the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). For this purpose, I have tabled a non-paper containing a number of paragraphs intended as a chapeau to the documents that the Chairman presented last year, which have been used as the basis for the Group's work this year. Discussions and negotiations are continuing.

To deal with a number of contentious issues, I requested the delegation of Germany to volunteer to act as coordinator of a small group to try to resolve contentious issues relating to one part of the chapeau. Discussions are taking place, and this afternoon I expect to produce a non-paper as a result of the consultations conducted by the small group, with a view to discussing this non-paper in the wider format of the Working Group.

I hope that by the middle of this week the Working Group can have a final say on the status of the non-paper that I shall issue this afternoon, and that by the end of this week we will already have a paper by Working Group II on which the Disarmament Commission at this year's session can give its final say.

That is the status of the discussion in the Working Group that I am chairing.

The Chairman: I call on the Chairman of Working Group III.

Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda), Chairman of Working Group III: Working Group III, on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N, has held wide-ranging discussions based partly on last year's Chairman's paper and partly on the papers distributed by a good number of delegations. We have gathered all of these together, have almost completed part IV and are moving on to part V. We feel that we need a little more time to continue our consideration of part V, and we hope to do that this morning.

I plan very soon to convene an open-ended drafting group to take a preliminary look at the suggestions of the Chairman, which will soon be distributed. I think we are making good progress, and I am confident that by the middle of the week we shall be able to have a comprehensive draft upon which a complete report will be based.

Other business

The Chairman: I will take this opportunity to give representatives a brief report on the progress of my consultations on issues relating to streamlining the Disarmament Commission's procedures. After the exchange of opinions we had here last Wednesday, I held a round of consultations with delegations, and my appraisal is that we have a healthy chance to have a convergence of minds. At this point I would urge delegations to preserve their open-minded approach to these issues so that we can positively conclude consultations towards the end of this week. I continue to be open to all delegations wishing to address these issues.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.